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Report of the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Members of the General Assembly the report on the question of human rights and extreme poverty submitted by Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, in accordance with resolution 8/11 of the Human Rights Council.

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Summary

The mandate of the United Nations independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty is outlined in Human Rights Council resolution 8/11. The expert focuses her activities on the integration of a human rights perspective into international, regional and national efforts to reduce poverty and is currently paying particular attention to social protection and social security systems.

The present report addresses the impact of the current global financial crisis on people living in extreme poverty and the enjoyment of their human rights. It stresses that the crisis offers an opportunity to move beyond the restructuring of the global financial and monetary systems and to place people at the centre of policy measures by enhancing social protection systems from a human rights-based approach. The report describes how human rights standards provide a normative framework for the adoption of social protection measures and provide guidance for their design, implementation and evaluation. Beyond reaffirming political will to rescue economies, the report urges the international community to take action and mobilize support in order to ensure that those who continue to suffer the most acute consequences of economic crises are protected and supported through the adoption and strengthening of social protection systems.

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I. Introduction

1. In resolution 8/11, the Human Rights Council calls upon the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty to contribute to international efforts related to the elimination of poverty.

2. In 2009, the independent expert participated in the tenth special session of the Human Rights Council on the theme "The impact of the global economic and financial crises on the universal realization and effective enjoyment of human rights". She also sent a written contribution to the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. During the eleventh session of the Human Rights Council, the independent expert presented a report which analyses cash transfer programmes from a human rights perspective.

3. The present report analyses why there has been a revival of interest in social protection in recent months, and how this has translated into practice. It argues that human rights principles and standards need to be considered as a priority in this respect.

4. First, the report offers an overview of the impact of the global financial crisis on the enjoyment of human rights. It then describes the existing human rights framework for social protection systems and indicates the requirements for adopting a human rights-based approach in order to assist the implementation of these initiatives. It also describes recent initiatives announced at the international level to enhance social protection. The report concludes with recommendations for the enhancement of social protection systems using a human rights-based approach.

II. The urgent need to fulfil long-standing commitments

5. In recent months, millions of people on every continent have been rapidly pushed into poverty and extreme poverty as a result of the downturn in the financial markets in developed countries and the resulting slowdown of the global economy.[1]

6. The unprecedented impact of the current global economic and financial crisis on the poor is very alarming. This crisis demonstrates the urgent need to establish and expand social protection systems around the world in order to protect those already living in poverty and to prevent yet more people being pushed into a life of poverty. Human rights standards provide a normative framework that demand the adoption of social protection measures and provide guidance for their design, implementation and evaluation.

7. The crisis has had devastating consequences on the enjoyment of human rights, especially among vulnerable groups, and this demands immediate attention and action. The rapid rise in levels of poverty is not an unpredictable accident. The failure of States to protect people against economic hazards, and the fact that 80 per cent of the world's population have little or no access to adequate social protection coverage,[2] have greatly contributed to what can only be called a human rights disaster.

[1] See, for example, World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2009: a development emergency* (Washington, D.C., 2009), pp. 1 and 2.

[2] UNDP, Cash Transfers and Social Protection, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, 2008.

8. This current crisis, like previous ones, shows that neglecting social protection and the provision of social services comes at very high cost for present and future generations. Whereas the actual economic slowdown may be limited in time, its effects on many people may last for generations. The crisis may trap those who are unable to afford basic needs during a prolonged period of unemployment and very scarce income in extreme poverty for the rest of their lives, and their children may also face a lifetime of poverty.

9. Ensuring access to social protection is not an optional policy choice or a gesture of charity, but an obligation enshrined in international human rights law. Moreover, evidence from previous crises indicates that ensuring universal access to social protection is a sound economic decision.[3]

10. In recent months, world leaders have repeatedly expressed their determination to respond to the collapse of financial markets. The allocation of public funding amounting to as much as $18 trillion (or almost 30 per cent of the gross world product)[4] to recapitalize banks, nationalize financial institutions and provide guarantees on financial assets, as well as the elaboration of fiscal stimulus plans amounting to about $2.7 trillion, demonstrates unprecedented political will to respond to the crisis. We must generate similar political will to ensure that long-standing pledges to reduce and eradicate poverty are translated into action and results.

11. There is evidence of substantial political momentum in favour of investments in social protection as a response to the crisis. It is crucial, however, that any measures taken are not short-sighted and do not ignore human rights commitments. States must not focus only on fixing the obvious problems in the architecture of the international financial and monetary system which have been revealed by the crisis. Such measures would be insufficient if people who are suffering as a result of the crisis are not put at the centre of the agenda and steps are not taken to protect their rights.

12. Beyond reaffirming the political will to rescue economies, the General Assembly must mobilize action to fulfil long-standing commitments to end poverty and respect human rights. Irrespective of crises, it is time to accept and recognize that social protection systems are necessary to effectively fulfil these commitments by providing protection to those people that continue to suffer the most acute consequences of economic shocks.

13. Admittedly, establishing social protection schemes is not a simple task. Tight budgets increase this challenge, particularly during a period of economic turbulence, but legally binding human rights standards demand the adoption of social protection schemes at all times. It must be underlined that social protection policies and schemes contribute to the realization of human rights.

14. Adopting a human rights-based approach to investment in social protection not only gives legitimacy to these investments, but is also instrumental in protecting them against the effects of corruption, clientelism and political instability that changes in Governments can cause.

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[3] Martin Ravallion, "Bailing out the world's poorest", *Policy Research Working Paper 4763* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., October 2008).

[4] A/CONF.214/4, p. 3.

III. Social protection systems

15. For the purpose of this report, social protection is defined as encompassing a wide range of policies designed to address the risks and vulnerabilities of individuals and groups, both those who can and those who cannot work, in order to help them cope and overcome situations of poverty, especially when it results from incidents outside their control. Social protection includes a broad range of instruments ranging from safety nets, social assistance and social insurance to mutual and informal risk management.

16. Social protection systems are an important dimension in the reduction of poverty. They serve to protect the most vulnerable from falling further into poverty and ensure access to health services and education. Social protection systems act as economic stabilizers, thereby limiting the contraction of aggregate demand and in turn curtailing the potential depth of a recession. They also assist in building social cohesion, which can reduce the likelihood of social unrest. In addition, if they are well designed, social protection systems may contribute to the achievement of several human rights, such as the rights to adequate standard of living, health, education and social security.

17. Social protection systems are generally structured around three main objectives: (a) facilitating recovery from the crises that have led people to become poor; (b) contributing to the ability of chronically poor people to emerge from poverty and to challenge oppressive socio-economic relationships; (c) supporting the less active poor (such as the elderly, persons with disabilities and children) so that poverty will not be inherited by the next generation.

18. For all three steps, a large number of measures and instruments already exist for States to put a social protection system in place (for example, insurance schemes, public works, food aid, targeted cash transfer or social funds). However, not all of these measures in their current form result in poverty alleviation or the realization of human rights.

IV. The global financial crisis and its impact on the human rights of people living in extreme poverty

19. In recent months, Governments have repeatedly accepted publicly that the economic crisis affects individuals and, in particular, vulnerable groups. However, apart from a resolution on the impact of the crisis adopted by the Human Rights Council at its tenth special session,[5] most public statements fall short of recognizing that the crisis dramatically affects people's enjoyment of human rights.

20. The outcome document of the General Assembly session on the crisis, which took place in June 2009, illustrates this. It specifically mentions the need to address the human costs of the crisis, adding that these have serious developmental consequences on the human security of those affected.[6] Similarly, Governments of

[5] The Council expressed deep concern that the universal realization and effective enjoyment of human rights are being challenged due to multiple and interrelated effects of the crisis; see A/HRC/S-10/2.

[6] A/RES/63/303, annex, para 3.

the G-20 countries agreed that they had a "collective responsibility to mitigate the social impact of the crisis to minimize long-lasting damage to global potential".[7]

21. Such human costs or social impacts for example, hunger, malnutrition, poor health, a lack of access to social security, the absence of education, also represent a lack of enjoyment of the human rights to food, water and sanitation, health, social security, education, and, in general, the right to an adequate standard of living.

A. Overall impact of the crisis

22. The current crisis started as a crisis within capital markets in developed countries but quickly transformed into a major crisis for the real economy of the whole world. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that global activity will contract by 1.3 per cent in 2009, the worst contraction since the Second World War. While impacts may be difficult to quantify, there is no doubt that the financial crisis has already had a severe impact on the enjoyment and realization of human rights. The impact of the crisis on the enjoyment of human rights is both evident and alarming.

23. The living conditions of the extreme poor, who were already greatly affected by the dramatic rise in 2008 of food and energy prices, have worsened. More than 125 million people have already been pushed into poverty as a result of the food price crisis and estimates project that the current crisis may push 55 to 90 million more into extreme poverty in 2009.[8]

24. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the global number of unemployed persons could increase by between 20 million and 50 million in 2009 over 2007.[9] Not only will there be more unemployment, but labour conditions are also very likely to worsen owing to the shortage of employment opportunities.

25. According to the most recent assessment of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, there are areas where progress has slowed or reversed.[10] Estimates indicate that in some of the most vulnerable and low-growth economies of sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, regions in which the majority of people are living in extreme poverty, both the number of poor and the poverty rate are expected to increase.[11]

26. While all countries have been affected by the crisis, developing countries face additional difficulties in coping with the crisis owing to their limited technical and institutional capacity to respond. In low-income countries public budgets may shrink dramatically as a result of the reductions in export volumes, commodity prices, remittances, tourism and foreign direct investment, as well as possible reductions in bilateral and multilateral aid. Unsurprisingly, three quarters of the

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[7] "The global plan for recovery and reform", G-20 communiqué (2 April 2009), para. 25.

[8] World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2009: a development emergency* (Washington, D.C., 2009), pp. 1 and 2.

[9] See International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends, January 2009* (Geneva, 2009).

[10] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* (New York, 2009), p. 4.

[11] Ibid., p. 7.

countries with limited fiscal capacity are experiencing the further damaging effects of the crisis and require immediate assistance to help protect poor households.[12]

27. The negative impact of the crisis on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the disproportionate effect it has upon vulnerable individuals and groups must be underlined. Not only does the crisis affect the enjoyment of those rights, but it also leads to economic hardship and greater inequalities, which increase social tensions and can lead to social and domestic violence, increased criminal behaviour and weaker governance. Thus, the crisis has an impact on all human rights: cultural, civil, economic, political and social.

B. The right to food

28. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the number of people suffering from malnutrition is expected to reach a historic peak of over one billion people in 2009.[13] The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates the number of hungry people in South Asia to have risen to 405.6 million in 2008 from 300.6 million in 2006.[14]

29. Despite the decline in oil prices, food prices remain generally very high, at 2007 levels.[15] This, along with the economic recession, has severely impacted household food consumption. According to FAO, staple food prices continue to increase in some developing countries, especially in low-income food deficit countries.[16] This must be taken into consideration along with evidence from previous crises, notably in Asia, where poor households cut down on non-staple food consumption as the first coping strategy to save on food costs and reduce overall expenditure.[17]

30. Therefore, although price increases and economic downturns can be temporary, they can have long-lasting effects on individuals because of reductions in their food consumption. The distinct nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women and children are especially affected. Within households, women tend to be the first to make sacrifices, which can cause maternal under-nutrition, poor foetal growth and stunting in the first years of the child's growth. These elements are known to affect the survival and development of children. In the long run this can have detrimental effects on the child's schooling, leading to impaired human capital, reduced productivity and, therefore, lesser ability to emerge from poverty.

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[12] See Louise Cord and others, "The global economic crisis: assessing vulnerability with a poverty lens", Policy note (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2009).

[13] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2008* (Rome, 2008).

[14] See UNICEF, "A matter of magnitude: the impact of the economic crisis on women and children in South Asia" (June 2009).

[15] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Crop prospects and food situation, No. 3 (July 2009).

[16] Ibid.

[17] UNICEF, "A matter of magnitude: the impact of the economic crisis on women and children in South Asia" (June 2009).

C. The right to health

31. One result of poorer nutrition is that the health status of persons living in poverty is likely to deteriorate, with effects that are very difficult to reverse. Two factors should be taken into account. First, the 2007-2008 food price crisis has already aggravated the health status of many.[18] Second, income shortages and income insecurity, coupled with an absence of social assistance measures, worsen the situation.

32. It is, at this stage, too early to identify specific elements of deteriorating health status due to this crisis, but data on the impact of the food price crisis are becoming available and the experience of other crises suggests that these are reliable indicators. In Indonesia, the use of public health services during the 1997 economic crisis fell from 7.4 per cent to 5.6 per cent among adults and from 26 per cent to 20 per cent among children between 1997 and 1998.[19] It can be expected that a similar phenomenon will develop as a result of the current crisis in some developing countries. As of May 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) had already recorded reduced expenditure in the health system budgets in 16 countries. [20]

D. The right to housing

33. The collapse of housing markets in developed countries triggered the current crisis. As a result of globalization of the housing and real estate finance markets and economic adjustment policies, cities had in recent years become unaffordable for inhabitants of lower-income groups. Limited access to credit, coupled with soaring unemployment rates, increases the challenges for those seeking housing, in particular those living in poverty.[21]

34. The crisis has also had an immediate impact on security of tenure, for both owners and renters, particularly in countries more directly affected by the housing market collapse. Foreclosure has meant the loss of the home, often resulting in homelessness or inadequate living conditions.

E. The right to education

35. Despite progress towards the achievement of universal primary education coverage, the recent report on the Millennium Development Goals indicates that 10 per cent of the children of primary school age are out of school, and that the pace of progress in enrolment is not adequate to the achievement of the target in 2015. The crisis increases the challenges, as improvements in enrolment have frequently been associated with increases in national spending on education, which could be reversed as national budgets tighten.

36. In previous crises, children from the poorest households have been the ones most affected by the economic downturn. Poor families often prioritize other

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[18] http://www.who.int/food_crisis/global_food_crisis/en/index.html.

[19] See "Social health protection" available at http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ILC2009/TD9/Evans%20TD9.pdf.

[20] Ibid.

[21] See A/HRC/10/7.

activities, such as waged or unpaid domestic work over schooling in order to alleviate the financial burden on the family.[22] In Indonesia, for example, the 1997 economic crisis doubled the number of children that were outside of the school system.[23]

F. Impact on children

37. Evidence from previous crises regarding increases in child malnutrition and school enrolment, as described above, highlights the disproportionate impact of economic crises on children. Children are deeply affected by economic deprivation and other changes that significantly reduce family capabilities. Their dependence on family support and social services makes them particularly vulnerable to prolonged recessions and reduction in national budgets and social spending.

38. The long-term impact of the current crisis on children is particularly concerning. Various studies illustrate the lifelong repercussions from restricting children's access to health and education during crises. The impact is particularly acute when starvation, abuse or neglect is experienced in an infant's first months.[24]

G. Impact on women and gender equality

39. Women are disproportionately affected by the crisis owing to the multiple forms of discrimination that they suffer. Women are also affected by limited access to work and social benefits. They have a higher probability than men of finding themselves in a vulnerable employment situation or of being unemployed. Moreover, during periods of crisis, women tend to assume a heavier load of unpaid work and family care, the impact of which has not been fully studied or recorded. In 2008 the gender gap in employment seemed to narrow but this is only owing to the economic crisis being felt first in male dominated industries (for example, construction and automobile industries) rather than to any gains in gender equality. Moreover, sectors that employ high proportions of women are likely to shrink substantially.[25]

40. Cuts in social spending also tend to disproportionately affect women's and girls' access to education and health services. For example, more girls than boys are withdrawn from school to help with household work, serving to reinforce gender gaps in education.

41. Women and girls are also affected in the long run because of strategies adopted by households to cope with loss of income in the absence of external support. For example, pregnant women are at risk because they tend not to use medical services

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[22] See T. Woldehanna, N. Jones and B. Tefera, "The invisibility of children's paid and unpaid work: implications for Ethiopia's national poverty reduction policy", *Childhood* 2008; 15:177-201.

[23] E. Frankenberg, D. Thomas and K. Beegle, "The real costs of Indonesia's economic crisis: preliminary findings from the Indonesia family life surveys", in Rand Labor and Population Program Papers (1999).

[24] H. Alderman, J. Hoddinott and Bill Kinsey, "Long term consequences of early childhood malnutrition", *Oxford Economic Papers* (2006) and W. Fung, and W. Ha, "Intergenerational effects of the 1959-61 China famine", UNDP (2008).

[25] International Labour Organization, "The financial and economic crisis: a decent work response" (March 2009), para. 46.

that have become unaffordable, and at the same time they are more likely to fall ill because of poorer nutrition levels. Maternal mortality also rises as more childbirths are unattended. There is a risk that the Millennium Development Goals that relate to women will take even longer to achieve and that progress made with regard to gender equality will be slowed down or reversed.

H. Impact on migrants

42. There appears to be no comprehensive studies of the effects of the economic downturn on migrant workers, mainly because different sectors of the economy where migrant workers are employed are affected differently by the crisis. Two issues, however, must be highlighted. First, even before the crisis started, many migrant workers in developed and developing countries alike were already "working poor". Second, the false perception that migrants take jobs or that they compete for scarce welfare benefits tends to induce Governments to cut immigration numbers.[26]

43. Past experiences show that migrant workers, especially female migrant workers, are extremely vulnerable in times of crisis. According to ILO, even if there are no actual job losses, migrant workers may be forced to accept lower wages and endure unsatisfactory working conditions in an attempt to retain their position and maintain a secure source of income.[27] Additionally, in times of recession, the lack of work opportunities and increased discrimination and xenophobia deeply affect migrants' enjoyment of their human rights.

I. Impact on groups that are victims of multiple forms of discrimination

44. When multiple grounds of discrimination are involved, the impact of the crisis is different and they must be assessed in its complexity. Despite the difficulties in assessing the full impact of the crisis on other specific groups that are vulnerable to discrimination, evidence from past crises indicates that additional groups are disproportionately affected. For example, in times of economic recession, those who are the last to enter the labour market are the first to exit. Thus, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities are affected disproportionately. The current crisis is also likely to affect indigenous peoples disproportionately as they are historically among the poorest and most excluded groups.

45. Depending on the experience of the individual and the confluence of various grounds for discrimination such as gender, race, ethnicity, caste, social class, age, citizenship status and other factors, some individuals are going to experience much greater hardship as a result of the crisis. Thus, the interaction between, for example, grounds such as sex, age, race and disability must be taken into account together to assess the negative impact of the crisis on the enjoyment of human rights.

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[26] "The impact of the global financial crisis on migration", *IOM Policy Brief* (January 2009).

[27] Azfar Khan, Rola Abimourched, Ruxandra Oana Ciobanu, "The global economic crisis and the impact on migrant workers" (International Labour Organization, 7 April 2009).

V. The human rights framework and social protection

46. In order to protect and respect fundamental rights that are crucial for the protection of the poor (for example, the right to health, social security and the right to an adequate standard of living), States are required to devise and implement social protection policies. Not only can social protection policies assist greatly in the achievement of all human rights, but they can also be strengthened when they follow a rights-based approach.

A. Providing a normative framework

47. Human rights law provides a normative framework that assigns rights and responsibilities to individuals, groups and States. Thus, from a human rights perspective, beneficiaries of social protection are rights-holders that can make legitimate claims related to the allocation of resources. States and other actors are duty-bearers that are responsible and can be held accountable for their acts or omissions.

48. International standards need to be enforced, and to do so States are required to adopt new laws, design regulatory frameworks, amend existing national laws and administrative practices, strengthen the judiciary, establish national human rights institutions, increase participation and improve socio-economic standards, among other things. States must therefore implement structural reforms to ensure, inter alia, free and compulsory primary education, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour; equality before the law and equitable access to resources, which are indispensable for the good functioning of social protection systems.

49. States are also required to strengthen mechanisms that allow people to claim their rights, as well as to empower individuals to access and utilize mechanisms for claiming rights. These measures contribute greatly to reducing vulnerabilities and risks and enhancing the ability of households to manage risks and improve their standard of living. For example, potential beneficiaries of social protection programmes must know what entitlements they can receive and be able to challenge decisions that affect their benefits.

B. Recognizing rights and principles

50. In order to give full effect to the range of rights set out in international human rights law, States must implement social protection policies and systems. The duty to implement policies to advance the protection available to the poor flows directly from a number of human rights, in particular the right to social security and the right to an adequate standard of living; both of these rights are enshrined in the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights and in several international treaties[28] and ILO conventions, in particular Convention No. 102 (1952) concerning Minimum Standards of Social Security.

51. Social protection is not, however, required only in order to give effect to these two rights. A full range of other rights are relevant to social protection, such as the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to education, the protection of the family and maternity benefits, the right to work, the right to protection of employment and the rights of elderly persons.

52. In addition to these economic and social rights, other human rights are relevant when considering social protection measures and how they should be implemented, for example, the right to participate in public life, the right to access to information and the right to an effective remedy. The principles of equality, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability are also relevant. These rights are essential to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of social protection systems, for example, by enabling participation in the processes of designing a country's social protection system and ensuring that individuals can claim their entitlements.

53. Civil and political rights also contribute greatly and provide protection against certain risks and vulnerabilities, in particular, those caused by States such as inhumane treatment, arbitrary arrest or detention or unreasonable restrictions on the media and journalists.

C. Obligations imposed by economic, social and cultural rights

54. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights imposed several obligations upon States parties that are relevant in the establishment of social protections schemes:

(a) The minimum core obligation to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of all economic, social and cultural rights: the minimum levels that must be attained aim to secure basic subsistence and medical care for all members of society and provide protection to anyone without adequate resources. In this regard, social protection measures can be seen as a response to meeting basic minimum standards in relation to economic, social and cultural rights;

(b) The obligation to ensure the progressive realization of all economic, social and cultural rights: States must devote the maximum of their available resources to ensure progressive realization of these rights. It is important to note that the allocation of resources is not left to the complete discretion of States. States must grant a degree of priority to allocating resources to ensure basic subsistence

[28] The right to social security is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 22 and 25; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, articles 9 and 10; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 5.e.iv; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 11.1.e; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 26; and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, article 27. It also appears in regional human rights instruments such as the Protocol of San Salvador, article 9 and the European Social Charter, article 12. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights stipulates that the aged and the disabled shall also have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical or moral needs, article 18.4.

and social protection to everybody. This obligation means that retrogressive measures are unacceptable. If, therefore, measures are taken to reduce the scope or level of social protection programmes, States have to show that they have been introduced after consideration of all alternatives and are fully justifiable in regard to the protection of all economic, social and cultural rights;[29]

(c) The obligation to ensure special protection for the most vulnerable individuals and groups: the human rights framework pays particular attention to individuals belonging to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Their need for special assistance to ensure enjoyment of their rights must be prioritized and non-discrimination guaranteed. The principle of equality requires in certain situations that States take affirmative action or positive measures in order to diminish or eliminate conditions that cause or help to perpetuate discrimination.

D. Establishing a duty to provide international assistance and cooperation

55. The duty to cooperate is established in the Charter of the United Nations (Articles 55 and 56) and grounded in several human rights treaties (for example art. 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and art. 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). The responsibility of States to provide international assistance and cooperation applies to supporting and strengthening social protection systems worldwide. International cooperation is essential in order for developing States to overcome the various resource, institutional and technical limitations that they face in delivering social protection.

56. International assistance has, so far, been largely directed towards microcredit and job-creating programmes. The creation of social protection schemes should also be an objective of international aid, as it helps protect the core human rights of those who cannot generate income through work or benefit from work-related social security schemes.

VI. Adopting a human rights-based approach to social protection systems

57. A national social protection strategy cannot be considered in isolation from human rights commitments. This section illustrates how human rights are relevant to social protection and discusses some of the implications for the design and implementation of social protection schemes. When choosing the appropriate social protection system for a State, the human rights commitments discussed below should be taken into account.

[29] See CESCR general comment No. 3, para. 12; general comment No. 12, para. 28; general comment No. 14, para. 18; and general comment No. 19, paras. 40-42.

A. Recognizing the State obligation to provide social security

58. The right to social security is strongly affirmed in international human rights law, regional treaties and several ILO conventions.[30] Nevertheless, this is perhaps one of the most neglected of all human rights. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the world's population do not enjoy this right, with 20 per cent living in extreme poverty.[31] The absence of viable social security systems around the world is not an accident but it is the direct result of States' reluctance to invest in this area.

59. The normative content of the right to social security includes both social insurance (contributory schemes) and social assistance (non-contributory schemes). Non-contributory schemes play a significant role as it is unlikely that every person is adequately covered through an insurance-based system. Thus, this right places States under an obligation to protect and provide, to the maximum extent of available resources, for the poorest, who are generally not protected through contributory schemes.

60. In general comment No. 19, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights specified the essential elements of the right to social security, which calls for assistance for health care, sickness, old age, unemployment, employment injury, family and child support, maternity, disability and survivors and orphans.[32]

61. The Committee argued that the level of the benefits must be adequate, and the qualifying conditions for the benefits must be reasonable, proportionate, transparent and accessible to those who are entitled to them. The Committee noted in particular the importance of providing minimum coverage for those working in the informal economy as they cannot access formal schemes, arguing that this right includes the right not to be subject to arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions of existing social security coverage, whether obtained publicly or privately, as well as the right to equal enjoyment of adequate protection from social risks and contingencies.[33]

62. The Committee also identified the core obligations of States, which include the obligation to provide a minimum essential level of benefits to all individuals and families, and to ensure the right of access to social security systems or schemes in a non-discriminatory manner, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. Over time, the right to social security must be realized fully by States in accordance with their maximum available resources.

63. The adoption of a human rights-based approach demands that inaccurate preconceptions with regard to social security systems, for example, that they are not affordable or that they create dependency, be dismissed. Costing exercises conducted by ILO have shown that establishing a set of minimum guarantees, including basic cash benefits for the elderly and to families with children, social assistance to the unemployed and access to essential health care, is affordable, at least partially, in almost all countries.[34]

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[30] See note 28 above.

[31] "Social Security for all", *Social Security Policy Briefings*, Paper 7 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2009), p. 3.

[32] E/C.12/GC/19.

[33] Ibid., para. 9

[34] "Can low-income countries afford basic social security?", *Social Security Policy Briefings*, Paper 3 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2003), p. 17.

B. Respecting the principles of equality and non-discrimination

64. A human rights-based approach requires that States fulfil their duty to protect against risks and contingencies in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner. Accepting these underlying principles entails carefully screening policy choices in order to avoid the unfair exclusion of groups that would require protection.

65. This also implies a preference for schemes that are universal over those that benefit only a specific category of persons (for example, a pension for all persons over a certain age rather than only some in the age group). Even within targeting schemes, the principles of equality and non-discrimination must be respected, which makes the definition of criteria for targeting social policies a constant challenge for those working in this area.

66. Eligibility criteria utilized in targeted programmes must be fair, reasonable, objective and transparent, and individuals must have access to mechanisms for redress in case of errors. Targeted schemes must also avoid stigmatization of the beneficiaries.

67. To comply with these requirements in times of resource constraints, targeted schemes should be categorized broadly (for example, by age, location, widely recognized degree of exclusion), and within categories each provision should be universal (for example, universal coverage for everyone over 65). As capacity evolves, more sophisticated approaches to targeting can be adopted. In addition, measures must be taken to ensure that the coverage will be progressively extended to all when economic recovery takes place and public revenues improve.

68. Political decisions should be informed by the universality of human rights and by the capability of the State. Often, targeted programmes are expensive and difficult to implement, and they reduce social solidarity. Moreover, experience shows that technical problems in the design prevent targeted programmes from actually reaching the most vulnerable. Moreover, empirical research shows that careful targeting of programmes has not been accompanied by greater poverty reduction and that levels of exclusion remain high because of the data used. In a country-specific study, the World Bank estimated that the targeting criteria of one programme were as follows: "be uninformative, or even deceptive, about impacts on poverty and cost-effectiveness in reducing poverty".[35] Studies have also shown that programmes in Latin America carried levels of under-coverage varying between 26 to 84 per cent.[36] In this sense, universal programmes may in fact provide better coverage than targeted ones and they are less costly, especially in countries where administrative capacities are limited.

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[35] "How relevant is targeting to the success of an antipoverty program?" *Policy Research Working Paper 4385* (Washington, D. C., November 2007).

[36] Thandika Mkandawire, "Targeting and Universalism in Poverty Reduction", *Social Policy and Development Programme Paper Number 23* (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, December 2005).

C. Ensuring progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights

69. Social protection instruments must be developed taking into account the long-term impact that these measures may have in the expansion of social security coverage and the fulfilment of the State obligation to ensure it. Safety-nets programmes (generally in kind assistance schemes, such as food rations) are one particular policy instrument which is designed to prevent destitution and help people to cope with emergencies. They are put in place to prevent individuals from falling below a given standard of living and are usually short term and very narrowly targeted. These programmes can bring some immediate relief. However, if they are too limited in time and in scope they run the risk of failing to produce desired effects in terms of poverty alleviation in the long term.

70. In general, safety nets fail to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability. Their restrictions in time and reach may lead to exclusion errors (exclusion of potential beneficiaries) that are against the principles of non-discrimination and universality. Moreover, as they are short term, they may not create incentives for States to improve the delivery of basic social services in the long term. In order to comply with the principle of progressive realization, States should devise plans to progress from safety net programmes to a stable national social security system.

D. Ensuring participation, transparency and accountability

71. A human rights-based approach to social protection systems requires taking into consideration the underlying principles of participation, accountability and transparency in the design, implementation and evaluation of all policies encompassed in the system. These principles not only are instrumental in ensuring efficiency in the adopted measures, but also respond to core obligations of States with respect to everyone's right to take part in public life, to have access to information and to have access to remedies in cases of violation.

72. Social protection systems that are developed without the active involvement of those who are supposed to benefit from them, as well as systems that do not take into account the views of those whose coping strategies they intend to support, suffer a great risk of failing to achieve their core objectives. Assessments of risks and vulnerabilities of those receiving benefits is essential information in the establishment of social protection systems, but it must not replace mechanisms to promote meaningful participation of beneficiaries throughout the design and implementation of the programmes.

73. From a human rights perspective, the capacities of rights-holders to know and claim their rights must be developed and strengthened. People must be empowered and, in this regard, access to information is crucial. If the existence of social protection programmes is unknown among those who should benefit from them, there are greater risks of unfair exclusion. Transparency around the regulation of any programme is particularly important. Measures to ensure transparency must pay special attention to ensuring that the information is accessible, culturally and physically, especially to vulnerable groups whose access may be limited by language differences, mobility limitations or lack of resources.

74. The absence of accessible and effective mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability may easily expose social protection systems to corruption and manipulation. Programmes that do not have channels to receive, process and respond to eventual complaints by their supposed beneficiaries risk perpetuating mismanagement practices.

E. Addressing specific concerns with regard to gender, age and disabilities

75. Social protection measures need to be designed without any discrimination and to ensure protection of those most in need. While social protection instruments can contribute to the better realization of the rights of the vulnerable, poorly designed measures may have the opposite effect.

76. Social protection measures may have a different impact depending on the gender, age, disability, ethnicity or other characteristics of the beneficiary. Often, measures fail to take into account the particular requirements of female-headed households, the elderly and persons with disabilities. For example, measures taken by Governments to protect employment often tend to be based on the stereotype of the male bread-winner and female caregiver and therefore concentrate on male-dominated areas of the economy. Public works programmes, for example, tend to prioritize male-dominated employment categories such as construction.

77. Understanding social protection systems as a broad set of policies that go beyond the provision of income is essential when addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable groups that are dependent on social services for their development and social integration. There is significant evidence that children are the main indirect beneficiaries of social protection measures. Yet, there are also indications that the sole provision of income will fall short in improving the overall situation of children if essential services are unavailable or inadequate. Similarly, the absence of integrated social services for the elderly and persons with disabilities will surely reduce the impact of the provision of social security.

78. Special measures or affirmative action measures may also be required. Elderly and persons with disabilities who are unable to work require permanent coverage by social protection systems. Basic universal pensions for old age are part of what ILO considers basic social protection. At least 72 countries in the world maintain a universal pension system, out of which 46 are low- or middle-income countries.[37]

VII. Supporting social protection as a response to the crisis

79. From a human rights perspective, Government policies to stimulate growth based only on macroeconomic concerns do not necessarily help the poor and most vulnerable to recover from crises. A more systematic strategy which actively promotes the realization of human rights is needed to respond to this crisis and ensure social protection for all people at all times.

80. In the past, economic literature has asserted that there is a trade-off between the reinforcement of social protection systems to protect the poorest on the one

[37] http://www.helpage.org/Researchandpolicy/Socialprotection/PensionWatch/Feasibility.

hand, and bolstering economic recovery after a crisis on the other. This assumption has been increasingly questioned in recent years. As the World Bank explains, when public spending in a crisis reaches the poorest, it brings a larger stimulus to aggregate demand, and hence output, given that poor people tend to have a higher propensity to consume.[38]

81. Recent economic theories and evidence also call into question the existence of such a trade-off between social protection and longer-term growth, affirming that the failure to address the short-term needs of the poorest victims of a crisis not only dulls the macroeconomic stabilization achieved by current public spending, but also increases poverty and inequality in the longer term, with negative consequences for longer-term growth.[39]

82. Social protection measures must be included in national recovery packages. Some countries have already started this process. For example, in 2009 Australia will spend one third of its economic stimulus package on cash payments to low- and middle-income families. Japan has introduced special grants for child-rearing. In South Africa, welfare grants and school feeding programmes have been enhanced, and, at the same time, the coverage of child grants and social pensions was extended. In Brazil and Costa Rica packages include the extension of existing unemployment benefits.

83. As responses to this crisis are devised, States should avoid the risk of seeking short-term quick fixes to poverty and insecurity. Lessons must be learned from past experiences. Countries hit by the Asian crisis in the 1990s put safety nets in place to help the poor cope with the adverse effects of the crisis. In retrospect, these safety nets were too little, too temporary and too late, and they absorbed large amounts of funds. Evidence reveals two key gaps in the protection that safety nets can provide. First, immediate relief may help beneficiaries to cope with crises, but it leaves them just as vulnerable to future crises, which in itself defeats the purpose of social protection. Second, corruption and clientelism were observed in the implementation of a number of the programmes.[40]

84. In this sense, international, regional and national responses to the current crisis should be understood by policymakers as providing an opportunity to establish the backbone of strong and stable social protection programmes. These social protection programmes may start as an emergency response but they must be reinforced and extended in time in order to ensure the full realization of the right to social security and other rights that are fundamental for the protection of the poor.

VIII. The need for international assistance and cooperation

85. Decreasing levels of exports, restricted access to credit and decreased foreign investment threatens to halt economic growth in many developing countries. This, in turn, will limit the capacity of developing countries to use money from public budgets to invest in social protection measures that are necessary to secure the

[38] Martin Ravallion, "Bailing out the world's poorest", *Policy Research Working Paper 4763* (World Bank, Washington D.C., October 2008), p. 6.

[39] Ibid.

[40] International Labour Organization, "Asia in the global economic crisis: impacts and responses from a gender perspective" (February 2009).

enjoyment of basic economic and social rights, which will have a devastating disproportionate impact on the poorest and most vulnerable.

86. Given the limited financial and institutional capacity of some States to finance and implement social protection systems, it is imperative for developed countries to provide assistance to less developed countries. The majority of developing countries have nascent or no social protection systems and are frequently unable to respond, from an economic point of view, with counter-cyclical measures.

87. The financial crisis must not be used as an excuse to break the commitments made by developed countries to provide 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in official development assistance (ODA). Not only must the committed levels of ODA be maintained, but developed countries should respond to the call to pledge an amount equivalent to 0.7 per cent of their stimulus packages as additional aid, over and above existing ODA commitments. This additional aid would be used to protect against the worst effects of the economic crisis in low-income countries and to protect the poor and vulnerable in developing countries.

88. Since the early days of the crisis, world leaders have indicated their will to promote social protection programmes through economic recovery plans. This renewed emphasis on multilateralism and international cooperation is a very positive step. The opportunity must be used to firmly place social protection on the agenda of immediate crisis responses and as a key element in the long-term strategy to reduce poverty and inequality and protect the most vulnerable from future crises.

89. Some recently announced initiatives at the international level that can contribute to the efforts to enhance social protection are discussed below.

A. The Vulnerability Financing Facility

90. The Vulnerability Financing Facility, set up by the World Bank is composed of the Bank's Global Food Crisis Response programme and a rapid social response programme. It seeks to provide technical and financial assistance to support Governments in their immediate and near-term responses to the crisis.

91. While it is too early to assess how funds are being disbursed, it is already known that the rapid social response programme will finance interventions that primarily support access to basic social services, especially maternal and infant health and nutrition as well as school feeding programmes. Second, it will target safety-net programmes, and third it will tackle employment.[41]

92. Grants made by the Vulnerability Financing Facility have the potential of boosting the capacity of domestic social protection programmes in the long term. It is important that the opportunity be used in such a way to ensure that measures are put in place to contribute to the realization of human rights, in particular, the rights to social security and to an adequate standard of living.

93. At the core of the rapid social response programme must be a commitment to universal social protection that benefits all vulnerable groups, together with support for building long-term and sustainable social security systems across the developing world.

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[41] See http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/financialcrisis/pdf/WBGResponse-VFF.pdf.

B. G-20 commitments and other donor country measures

94. At their meeting in April 2009, the G-20 recognized their collective responsibility to mitigate the social impact of the crisis in order to minimize long-lasting damage to global potential. In doing so, they committed $50 billion to support social protection, boost trade and safeguard development in low-income countries and pledged to make resources available for social protection in the poorest countries.[42]

95. At the Rome Social Summit in March 2009, G-8 countries also called for the improvement of social welfare systems as they are considered to be the driving force of a virtuous circle of confidence, and recognized the importance of promoting employment, income support and professional skills.[43]

96. Additionally, individual countries have started to pledge money to international financing facilities to support social protection. For example the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland announced in March 2009 that it would contribute $200 million to the World Bank's rapid social response programme.[44] It is essential that donor and recipients countries, as well as development agencies, take all measures to ensure that development policies and programmes are designed and implemented in ways that are consistent with human rights.

C. The social protection floor

97. Among nine major United Nations system-wide initiatives in response to the crisis, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) launched the social protection floor in April 2009. The concept of the social protection floor consists of two main elements: (a) services to guarantee geographical and financial access to essential public services (such as water and sanitation, health and education); and (b) transfers in the form of a basic set of essential social transfers, in cash and in kind, paid to the poor and vulnerable to provide minimum income security and access to essential services, including health care.[45]

98. ILO and WHO are leading this effort, following previous initiatives by ILO to support reshaping social security systems in order to ensure universal protection. The social protection floor seeks to address key policy issues such as: (a) how can a basic level of social protection for all, including first and foremost, the most vulnerable, be designed and implemented at country level? (b) how can such policies and measures be made compatible with the necessity to build a long-term sustainable architecture of national social protection systems? and (c) how can the fiscal space for social transfers be secured or increased?

99. Studies undertaken by ILO and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs show that the social protection floor is affordable in the short term and that it can lead to long-term objectives. For example, social transfers could

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[42] "The global plan for recovery and reform", G-20 communiqué (2 April 2009), para. 25.

[43] See http://www.g8italia2009.it/G8/Home/IncontriMinisteriali/MinisterialeLavoro/G8-G8_Layout_locale-1199882116809_IncontroLavoro.htm.

[44] See http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2009/World-Bank-Group-Spring-Meetings-2009-Washington-US/.

[45] CEB Issue Paper: The global financial crisis and its impact on the work of the UN system, p. 20.

be financed with 2 to 5 per cent of the GDP of developing countries and in the longer term increased fiscal space would allow for expanded programmes.[46]

100. CEB argues that the social protection floor can correspond to the existing notion of core obligations, to ensure the realization of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of rights embodied in human rights treaties.[47] In this regard, it is worth stressing that minimum core obligations work in conjunction with the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. States must commit to achieving higher levels of services and benefits when their budgets increase and the fiscal space widens.

101. The core obligations with regard to social security, defined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in general comment No. 19, usefully define a course to implement the social transfer element of the social protection floor in a way that realizes the right to social security. The obligations emphasize the notions of (a) a minimum essential level of benefits to all individuals and families; (b) access to social security systems on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, and the existence of specific measures to protect them; (c) a need for a strategy and action plans, as ensuring the minimum essential level of benefits is not in itself sufficient to realize this right; and (d) a need to monitor the realization of the right, ensuring accountability mechanisms are put in place.

102. While it remains to be seen if and how States will implement the social protection floor concept, the extent to which this process is based on the recognition of State's obligations with regard to human rights is a central aspect to be considered.

103. The social protection floor should be understood as the minimal set of policies and measures upon which States can build, and make available, higher standards of protection once national budget capacities increase. From a human rights perspective, it cannot be a stand-alone policy, but rather must be seen as the basic element around which a broad national social protection policy is built and articulated.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

104. **Social economic indicators show that the current global financial crisis is having unparalleled negative consequences on the enjoyment of human rights for many people around the world, in particular for those living in situations of poverty and extreme poverty. The fulfilment of a vast range of human rights is seriously compromised by the absence of social protection schemes to alleviate the acute impact of a possible long period of widespread global recession and economic contraction.**

105. **Responses to the crisis are being devised and it is possible to identify a number of positive steps, for example, the recognition of the need to react to the financial collapse in a globally coordinated fashion. Yet, in order to achieve**

[46] See Bob Huber, "A global social floor" presentation at the Regional Expert Meeting on Social Protection, Dakar, Senegal, 9-11 June 2008.

[47] United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, Financial and Economic Crises, Joint Crisis Initiatives, p. 46.

durable results, beyond reaffirming political will to rescue economies, the international community must focus on the urgent need to protect the enjoyment of human rights by those who continue to suffer the most acute consequences of the economic crisis, in particular those living in poverty.

106. Social protection systems hold the potential to address the effects of the crisis and reduce vulnerability to future shocks. However, long-term strategies to protect people in the future have thus far been largely ignored by the international community. Even if there is momentum in favour of the expansion of social protection schemes around the world as a response to this crisis, only 5 per cent of the $1 trillion global stimulus package created by the G-20 in April 2009 has been allocated to supporting social protection schemes, boosting trade and safeguarding development in low-income countries, and only a small portion of that will effectively be allocated to social protection.

107. Some of the measures taken in response to the crisis tend to overemphasize the mitigation of the immediate short-term impact of the crisis and overlook the structural constraints that keep significant portions of the population living in extreme poverty well beyond periods of economic turbulence. The human rights framework requires that States adopt a more systematic strategy that focuses on long-term protection of the human rights of the poor.

108. Even when acknowledging the need to invest in social protection, States are often unwilling to recognize these initiatives as part of the fulfilment of their long-standing human rights obligations. States should avoid the risk of seeking short-term quick fixes to poverty and insecurity while neglecting longer-term measures rooted in the recognition of their duty to ensure universal access to social protection at all times.

109. Irrespective of crises, social protection systems are necessary to effectively fulfil long-standing commitments to reduce poverty and protect, respect and fulfil human rights. The World Solidarity Fund or the Rapid Social Response Fund under the new Vulnerability Financing Facility endorsed by the G-20 could be used as a vehicle for such a shift if a solid human rights-based approach guides these initiatives. Social protection is required in order to ensure the realization of all human rights for all, in particular for those who are most vulnerable, marginalized and living a life of misery, and are trapped in poverty and subject to multiple forms of discrimination.

110. In this sense, the independent expert wishes to present the following recommendations:

(a) Strengthening national social protection systems by adopting a human rights-based approach:

(i) States must put in place social protection systems or enhance support to existing systems. Human rights standards provide an adequate basis to frame social protection systems legally and institutionally. Particular attention must be given to social protection by economic stimulus packages; this is a requirement based in international human rights law;

(b) Working towards universal coverage and prioritizing the most vulnerable:

(i) States must work towards progressively building a stable social protection system that is accessible to all without discrimination. The various responses to the crisis that support the expansion of social protection must be formulated bearing in mind that the ultimate goal should be universal coverage by social security. Universal benefits (for example, tax-financed benefits for all) not only limit the risk of unfair exclusion and discrimination, but, as evidence shows, are also more cost-effective;

(ii) States and all other relevant stakeholders supporting social protection must give priority to those who are most exposed to the negative consequences of the current financial crisis. Emergency policies must be implemented urgently to ensure the survival of the poor who are worst affected. If targeted measures are necessary, States must ensure that processes are fair, effective and transparent, and that they incorporate safeguards against any form of discrimination;

(c) Promoting participation, accountability and transparency:

(i) States must fully integrate human rights principles into the design and implementation of social protection systems. Recipients of assistance must be treated as active rights-holders. Mechanisms must be put in place to promote their meaningful participation in the design and implementation of measures assisting them. The provision of information on the functioning of the programmes must be accessible to all, in particular those receiving assistance. Finally, accessible mechanisms must be in place to ensure accountability of those responsible for implementing social protection systems;

(d) Addressing specific concerns in regard to gender, age and disabilities:

(i) States must identify and address the specific obstacles that impede the social integration and protection of particularly vulnerable groups. Social protection systems must include specific measures to ensure, for example, that women are not further excluded from labour markets and that they are offered equal opportunities to work. Similarly, the provision of adequate social services is an essential complement to the provision of social assistance for the full development of children and the social integration of persons with disabilities and the elderly;

(e) Strengthen international cooperation efforts:

(i) States must continue to join forces in order to devise and implement measures to respond to the crisis and promote recovery; such cooperation must be guided by human rights standards. As widely recognized, effective responses to the crisis, in particular in countries that are more exposed to extreme poverty, require international cooperation. Within this context, it is crucial for the levels of official development assistance to be maintained, if not enhanced.

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Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of progress on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in response to General Assembly resolution 63/216. While good progress has been made in implementing some aspects of the Hyogo Framework for Action, such as improvements in institutional capacities and in disaster preparedness, acceleration in implementation is required towards all goals of the Framework. New information contained in the recently launched *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* indicates that growing exposure to risk is outstripping current abilities to reduce vulnerability.

There is an urgent need to invest more in systematic implementation and to address the driving factors: rural poverty and vulnerability, unplanned urban growth and declining ecosystems. The second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in June 2009, called for action to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation efforts and to strengthen community-level action. It also discussed a number of specific targets and new initiatives to scale up action and investment for disaster risk reduction.

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I. Trends in disasters and disaster risks

1. Globally, disaster risk is increasing substantially with regard to most hazards, with the risk of economic loss increasing much faster than the risk of mortality. The main driver of this trend is rapidly increasing exposure to risk. As countries develop, and both economic conditions and governance improve, vulnerability decreases, but not rapidly enough to compensate for the increased exposure.

2. During the reporting period, June 2008 to June 2009, 343 disasters linked to natural hazards affected more than 42 million people, taking more than 14,000 lives and causing economic damage totalling $57.4 billion. Asia had the highest occurrence rate (36 per cent), Africa the highest mortality (60 per cent) and the Americas the highest economic losses (88 per cent).[1]

3. Disasters linked to hydrometeorological hazards, such as floods, storms and droughts, caused more than 80 per cent of the damage inflicted by all types of natural hazards. Asia had the highest occurrence rate (37 per cent) and the highest mortality (51 per cent), and the Americas were hardest hit in terms of economic losses (88 per cent).[2] Drought affected 14.5 million people in nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Heavy monsoon rains caused severe flooding and affected more than half a million people in India, Nepal and Pakistan. The 2008 Atlantic hurricane season was very active, with 16 tropical storms, 5 of which were high-intensity hurricanes. Cuba was hit by four successive tropical cyclones, which damaged or destroyed 500,000 homes. In Haiti, more than 800,000 people were affected and the estimated losses of $900 million amounted to 15 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Hurricane Ike caused economic losses estimated at $30 billion in the United States of America.

4. The first edition of the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, which I launched in Manama on 17 May 2009,[3] provides strong evidence of how disasters are both a cause and a consequence of poverty, and how climate change impact magnifies the disaster risk. The report identifies three main drivers for the risk patterns: deficient urban and local governance, livelihood vulnerability in rural areas and declining ecosystems.

5. The report underscores the fact that disaster risk is increasingly urban. It is projected that by 2010, 73 per cent of the world's urban population and most of its largest cities will be in developing countries. Approximately 1 billion people worldwide live in vulnerable informal settlements around cities, and that number is growing by approximately 25 million per year.

6. Approximately 75 per cent of the people below the international poverty line live in rural areas, including 268 million in sub-Saharan Africa. Rural poverty is associated with unequal land distribution, lack of access to improved seeds, poor use of irrigation technology, lack of economic diversification, weak markets and trade barriers.

7. The global decline in ecosystems and the loss of many services they provide contribute to increasing vulnerability for poor urban and rural communities. For

[1] International Disaster Database, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2009.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: Risk and Poverty in a Changing Climate*, United Nations, 2009.

example, mangroves cleared to create shrimp ponds increase the risks associated with storm surges, while drained wetlands increase flood risks, and deforestation increases both flood and landslide risks.

8. In addition, climate change is beginning to magnify the uneven nature of the distribution of disaster risk by increasing the hazards and at the same time eroding the basis for resilience, and therefore further skewing disaster impacts towards poor communities in developing countries.

II. Progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action

A. Action at the national level

9. Systematic reports have been made by 88 countries on their progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action. These are submitted to the HFA Monitor and summarized in the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*. A total of 120 Governments have now designated official focal points for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of progress of the Framework for Action.

10. In general terms, countries are making good progress in strengthening capacities, institutional systems and legislation to address deficiencies in disaster preparedness and response, as well as in other areas, such as the enhancement of early warning systems. As a result, some lower-income countries, such as Bangladesh and Cuba, have already made dramatic strides in reducing mortality risk in tropical cyclones and floods. Despite the fact that Cuba was hit by four successive tropical cyclones in 2008, only seven deaths were reported.

11. By contrast, little progress has been made in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into social, economic, urban, environmental and infrastructural planning and development. As a result, the risk of global economic losses continues to grow at a faster rate than mortality risk. The rate of increasing exposure to risk is outstripping the current abilities of many Governments to reduce vulnerability.

12. Progress is closely related to national income levels. High-income countries are making greater progress in adopting hazard-resistant building standards and environmental planning regulations, compared with many low-income countries which lack the necessary technical, human, institutional and financial capacities. Many countries, including high-income countries, still lack a holistic policy and strategic framework for addressing disaster risk.

B. Action at the regional level

13. Progress is being made at the regional level, where cooperation mechanisms such as regional platforms, networks and partnerships have been active in catalysing increasing action. Several regional coordination organizations have also developed relevant strategies and partnerships.

14. The Strategy secretariat currently has representation through its regional offices in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and West Asia, and

North Africa. The focus has been on mobilizing and coordinating support to regional and national disaster risk reduction processes, including through strong regional alliances with intergovernmental organizations, regional policy dialogues, baseline information and implementation tools and close cooperation with United Nations agencies and the World Bank.

C. Action at the international level

15. The Strategy secretariat facilitated and promoted the engagement of numerous partners in disaster risk reduction in a coordinated manner. The United Nations Development Group finalized and disseminated guidelines on disaster risk reduction to United Nations country teams. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works in 50 high-risk countries on enhancing disaster risk reduction and recovery capacities. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a partnership between the World Bank and the Strategy, has supported the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction through its country assistance strategies.

16. Tools, guidance, training and good practice information packages have been developed for national and local governments, communities and city authorities on early warning, risk and vulnerability assessment and education. Several networks of parliamentarians around the world have started advocating for investment in disaster risk reduction as a tool for climate change adaptation.

17. Substantial scaling up of activity and enhanced synergy among environmental, development and humanitarian partners have been taking place. The Strategy secretariat also continued to actively promote disaster risk reduction as an adaptation policy and to build close working relationships on the topic with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In September 2008, I convened a ministerial-level meeting in New York on reducing disaster risk in a changing climate in order to further advance that agenda.

D. Coordination and guidance through the Strategy system

18. Strategy stakeholders at all levels have a fundamental role in supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. In order to further strengthen the Strategy system, in particular to ensure its system-wide high-level leadership and coordination role in disaster risk reduction, I have appointed Margareta Wahlström as my Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Ms. Wahlström assumed her office in January.

19. The second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Geneva from 16 to 19 June in a context of growing alarm about global climate change and of increasing disaster risks. Recognition of the role of the Platform was demonstrated by the increase in active participation, with 1,688 participants from 152 Governments and 137 organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, international financial institutions, regional bodies and scientific and academic communities. High-level representatives, including several heads of State or Government, highlighted in stark, unequivocal terms the fact that reducing risk is critical to managing the impacts of disasters, including those

resulting from the effects of climate change, and to avoiding an erosion of social and economic welfare.

20. There has been a significant increase in political will and practical experience with respect to disaster risk reduction since the first session of the Global Platform in 2007. The second session placed a strong emphasis on lessons learned and the development of coordinated and sound guidance to implement systematically disaster risk reduction measures. The Chair's summary highlighted four key areas. [4]

21. There was an overwhelming view that urgent action is required to harmonize and link the frameworks for both disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the broader context of poverty reduction and sustainable development, and that disaster risk reduction must be a concrete part of the deal on climate change that I hope will be sealed at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

22. Reducing disaster risk at the community and local levels and promoting the role of women as drivers of action were seen as being essential and needing systematic support from central or local governments as part of the policy mainstream. Such collaboration and partnerships should reflect the mutual dependence of central and local governments and civil society actors.

23. Recognizing that the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action needed to accelerate rapidly from isolated actions and pilot projects to full implementation, the Global Platform saw the setting of targets in specific areas as being essential. It was proposed, for example, that national assessments of the safety of existing education and health facilities be undertaken by 2011 and that concrete action plans for safer schools and hospitals be developed and implemented in all disaster-prone countries by 2015. Other targets were proposed for national risk assessments, municipal disaster recovery plans, early warning systems, water risks and the enforcement of building codes.

24. The Global Platform identified a drastic mismatch between the resources required to address disaster risk in developing countries and those actually available, and urged the massive scaling up of action and funding from national budgets and international sources. There was significant support to target the equivalent of 10 per cent of humanitarian relief and recovery expenditure, and at least 1 per cent of all national development and development assistance funding, to risk reduction measures. More explicit information on the effectiveness and cost of specific measures and patterns of investment in disaster risk reduction is needed.

25. The Global Platform acknowledged the important role of the Strategy system in supporting Governments and civil society organizations, and considered that the planned midterm review of the Hyogo Framework for Action would require ownership on the part of Governments, the close involvement of civil society, strengthened regional capacities for coordination and support from the Strategy secretariat and its partners. It was also emphasized that the midterm review would benefit from using existing sets of benchmarks and guidelines developed to measure progress on the Hyogo Framework for Action. Many participants expressed interest and readiness to support the midterm review in a practical manner. The Strategy

[4] The Chair's summary and other meeting documents are available at www.unisdr.org.

secretariat is working on a timetable for the midterm review and will keep Member States regularly informed on the next steps of the process.

26. During the reporting period, the Strategy secretariat guided and provided support to national processes for the review of progress on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, through a reporting framework, various regional and national training workshops and the "HFA Monitor" system, on the basis of the goals and priorities of the Hyogo Framework and the Strategy guidance publication on generic indicators. The HFA Monitor is accessible online (www.preventionweb.net) for designated national authorities and Framework focal points.

27. By June 2009, 103 countries were in the process of reporting and 88 national reports had been submitted online. The analysis of the information available was included in the *2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* and was made available for the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. A regional synthesis report was prepared for the third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in December 2008. The Americas, the Arab region, Europe and Africa conducted similar exercises and presented regional reports to the Global Platform. The collaborative effort on the *Global Assessment Report* by United Nations agencies, the World Bank, Member States, regional intergovernmental and technical institutions, civil society and other Strategy partners clearly demonstrates the benefit of the Strategy's multi-stakeholder system in guiding and supporting the implementation of disaster risk reduction.

28. In parallel, the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction undertook an extensive multi-country and multipartner review of local perspectives on progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework. In its report it concluded that the efforts undertaken in the context of national programmes had so far had little impact on vulnerability at the local level and that a deeper engagement with local communities was essential to overcome that shortcoming.

29. PreventionWeb has developed a substantial repository of accessible information and a virtual hub mechanism for the dissemination of practical information, including standards and guidelines, lessons learned and access to expertise. It has published over 4,500 articles in 12 content collections, and reached over 22,000 unique visitors globally in 2008. Regional Strategy information systems are also being developed in collaboration with the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery and other partners.

30. A directory, *Disaster Risk Reduction in the United Nations 2009*, was produced as the first comprehensive compilation of mandates, programmes and services aligned with the Hyogo Framework priorities of the United Nations organizations and the World Bank. The directory is available on PreventionWeb and will be regularly updated.

E. Investing in disaster risk reduction

31. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/216, called for the international community to invest systematically in disaster risk reduction with a view to

implementing the objectives of the Strategy and providing adequate contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction.[5]

32. Contributions of approximately $7.6 million were received by the Trust Fund in calendar year 2008 to support joint results of Strategy partners, including the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*. The joint work programme and Trust Fund support for it will be reviewed with key Strategy partners in 2009, with a view to improving the collaborative actions of partners and ensuring more strategic coherence with the Hyogo Framework for Action requirements.

33. The resource mobilization efforts of the Strategy secretariat have contributed to increasing levels of voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund. Total income in 2008 amounted to $28.9 million. Although there has been a gradual expansion of the donor base, a small group of core contributors[6] continues to meet the majority of the secretariat's resource requirements — the five largest contributors accounted for 66 per cent of annual income in 2008 (as opposed to 77 per cent in 2007). The number of donors increased from 18 to 22, with notable new contributions from Australia and Spain, and a contribution from Bahrain — the first from the Gulf region.

34. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery continues to develop as a key collaborative mechanism for supporting global disaster risk reduction. Total pledges by donors to the World Bank-managed tracks 2 and 3 of the Facility during 2007-2008 exceeded $90 million.

35. UNDP works in more than 50 high-risk countries on disaster risk reduction and recovery. In 2008, disaster risk reduction expenditures climbed to $140 million, of which more than 90 per cent went directly to national programmes.

36. The reporting period saw several positive developments in the creation of an enabling policy environment for international investments in risk reduction. Australia recently launched the policy set out in *Investing in a safer future: a disaster risk reduction policy for the Australian aid programme*. In February 2009, the European Commission adopted as a package two new communications: the "EU strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries", which was adopted by European Union development ministers in Brussels in May 2009, and "A community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters".

37. In addition, in April 2009, the European Commission presented a white paper, *Adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action*, which cites risk reduction as an essential part of successful adaptation. Denmark initiated a review of its strategic priorities in humanitarian assistance, which included a multipartner policy forum, held in Copenhagen in November 2008, on the theme "Linking climate change negotiations and disaster risk reduction".

38. As noted above (see paras. 20-25), the second session of the Global Platform discussed investments in disaster risk reduction and highlighted the usefulness of investment benchmarks, such as allocating a portion of national budgets to disaster

[5] The mechanism, administered by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, through which funds can be invested in secretariat and Strategy partner actions.

[6] In descending order of contributions: World Bank, European Commission, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Norway, Australia, Spain, Japan, Germany and Denmark.

risk reduction measures or certain percentages of humanitarian funds (10 per cent), development funds (1 per cent) and climate change adaptation funds (30 per cent) to disaster risk reduction work.

39. In my 2008 report (A/63/351), I pointed out the need to ensure a stable and predictable financial basis to enable the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to perform its key support functions for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/216, stressed the importance of disaster risk reduction and subsequent increased responsibilities of the Strategy secretariat, and requested me to explore all means of securing additional funding and to report on this to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. In that connection, I wish to report that internal consultations are under way, and I will report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

40. While good progress has been made recently on some aspects of disaster risk reduction, it is clear that much more needs to be done to achieve systematic investment in this area. Disasters are holding back progress on the achievement of poverty reduction and other Millennium Development Goals. Greater urgency is required to address the disaster risk drivers: rural poverty and vulnerability, unplanned and poorly managed urban growth and declining ecosystems. Disaster risk reduction offers the potential for a triple win — for adaptation, disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction.

41. Risk-prone countries are giving high priority to disaster risk reduction and are ready to move ahead quickly in the implementation of policies and strategies to address their risks. National and regional platforms need to be strengthened rapidly to coordinate such action, and the international community needs to facilitate better access to the resources, assistance and expertise required. Disaster risk reduction knowledge must be made easily accessible to all, in particular the most vulnerable and poorest communities, to increase their safety and resilience.

42. The implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action needs to accelerate rapidly from isolated actions and pilot projects to full-scale implementation with specific targets and concrete action in countries. Specific targets were proposed at the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, such as undertaking national assessments of the safety of existing education and health facilities by 2011. Targets for expenditure need to be considered and set by responsible authorities.

43. International and regional mechanisms for guidance and coordination have been developed quickly and need to be further developed to meet future demands. In particular, the elements of the Strategy system — the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Strategy secretariat and the national and regional platforms — are increasingly being recognized and supported as key vehicles for Governments and civil society alike. The new system developed by the Strategy secretariat for monitoring progress on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework is functioning well and, together with the *Global Assessment Report* process, has delivered critical information to steer policy and action on disaster risk reduction. The midterm review during 2009 and 2010 will provide an important opportunity to address

strategic and fundamental matters concerning the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action towards 2015 and beyond.

44. The following recommendations are proposed.

Accelerate the systematic implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action at the national and local levels

45. **In line with the need to accelerate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, I encourage Member States to strengthen their participation in the Strategy system, including national and regional platforms, thematic technical platforms, the midterm review process and the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in 2011.**

46. **In this vein, I strongly urge Member States to further develop and strengthen their implementation mechanisms, particularly national coordination mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, national and local risk assessments, targets for achievement, monitoring and review processes and community-level support.**

Ensure climate change adaptation through disaster risk reduction

47. **I welcome the growing calls to use disaster risk reduction strategies to advance adaptation to climate change, and strongly support the inclusion of such strategies in climate change policies. I encourage Member States to link disaster risk reduction and adaptation policies in national plans and strategies in every sector, especially in land-use and settlement planning, critical infrastructure development, the management of natural resources, health and education.**

Invest today for a safer tomorrow

48. **I call on Member States to dedicate substantially more funds from national budgets to reduce disaster risks, and to take the action necessary to halve the loss of life from disasters by 2015, when the term of the Hyogo Framework concludes. I recommend that Member States give consideration to investment benchmarks, such as the concept of allocating for disaster risk reduction measures 10 per cent of humanitarian relief and reconstruction funds, 1 per cent of national development funding and 30 per cent of national climate change adaptation funds.**

Support the safe schools and hospitals initiative

49. **I strongly encourage Member States to join the global initiative to secure the safety of schools and hospitals, in particular by investing in actions to undertake national assessments of the safety of existing education and health facilities by 2011 and to develop and implement concrete action plans for safer schools and hospitals by 2015.**

50. **I invite Member States to commemorate actively the International Day for Disaster Reduction and recommend that 13 October should be dedicated as the fixed date for this topic, starting in 2010.**

Strengthen the funding arrangements for the Strategy

51. **In the light of the increasing need to strengthen international cooperation efforts in support of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and, consequently, of the Strategy secretariat's support activities, I call on Member States and Strategy stakeholders to augment their financial contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction to ensure adequate support for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.**

Annex

Additional information on progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action*

A. Action at the national level

Priority 1
Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

1. According to information contained in the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, progress has been significant under priority 1 of the five priorities for action set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action, particularly in the development of policy and legislation and in strengthening multisector institutional systems and platforms for disaster risk reduction.

2. Bahrain has instituted a National Committee on Disaster Management; Ecuador has included disaster risk management in its new Constitution and national development plan, creating a new Technical Secretariat for Risk Management. The National Technical Committee on Risk Prevention and Mitigation of the Dominican Republic, established in 2008, provides advice and coordination of risk reduction activities at the national level. In Vanuatu, the national action plan tasks the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management with allocating ministerial budgets for disaster risk reduction to various ministries and departments. Colombia and the Islamic Republic of Iran have included disaster risk reduction in their national budgets. The Jamaican National Disaster Committee is chaired by the Prime Minister, and the national disaster plan sets out a comprehensive framework for participation for several Government agencies, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. The United States of America set out hazard-specific implementation plans in the context of its Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction Strategy for prioritizing and guiding future actions and spending. Lesotho and Namibia have finalized their national policies and have submitted them to Parliament for approval. In Sri Lanka, a National Disaster Management Coordinating Committee was established and a corporate plan for the Disaster Management Centre is under development.

3. Argentina, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Indonesia, Jamaica, Peru and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia established national platforms for disaster risk reduction during the reporting period. Only 50 countries have established such multi-stakeholder coordinating mechanisms. In the Cayman Islands, the Chamber of Commerce plays a role in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts in national disaster plans. Kenya established a secretariat for the coordination of the national platform and five multi-stakeholder committees, and Togo has strengthened the national platform as a coordination mechanism.

4. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in collaboration with over 80 of its national societies, produced a Framework for Community Safety and Resilience, which provides the basis for national societies to

* Complementing section II of the present report.

design and implement multisectoral community-based programmes. At least 130 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies reported that they implement community-based disaster risk reduction programmes, including educational and awareness-raising activities.

Priority 2
Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

5. Consistent progress has been reported in this area, although all countries acknowledge the need for more focused efforts on this front. Countries are still challenged to compile comprehensive risk assessments in a way that can inform disaster risk reduction, link early warning with disaster preparedness and response planning and use national information to inform local action.

6. Australia and New Zealand have established a comprehensive, integrated, multi-hazard approach to risk assessment. Switzerland aims to produce hazard maps and assessments covering the entire country by 2011 and ensure that they are applied by municipalities in land-use planning and building regulation processes. The Philippines has advanced its community-level risk assessment through hazard mapping. The development of a seismic monitoring network in Tajikistan is illustrative of the progress being made in many countries to improve hazard monitoring.

7. Seven countries[a] in South-Eastern Europe are systematically developing capacities on (a) disaster risk reduction strategies, policies, legislation and institutional capacities; (b) the capacity development of national meteorological and hydrological services to support disaster risk management; and (c) the development of financial risk transfer mechanisms supported by a partnership of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. This model is being extended to seven countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Multi-hazard early warning system initiatives are under way in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua, supported by a partnership of international agencies, while in China, a multi-hazard early warning system for the megacity Shanghai has been developed through collaboration between international, national and city organizations.

8. In Costa Rica, research agencies, together with the National Emergency Commission, are undertaking disaster risk assessments. In Jamaica, hazard data are used in the development of a methodology to rank vulnerable communities. The United States has developed a multi-hazard loss estimation programme, "Hazards U.S. Multi-Hazard (HAZUS-MH)". A hazard vulnerability assessment and a national assessment of living conditions commissioned by the Government of Cayman Islands are providing valuable data on storm surges and sea level rise factors and on vulnerability for the lower-income population.

9. Several countries in Africa have undertaken disaster risk assessments for specific sectors and hazards. In Mozambique, the national disaster management institution established a National Disaster Loss Observatory and a National Risk Information System, with the support of the Global Risk Identification Programme.

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[a] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Work is also under way to compile a national risk atlas and to develop a simplified tool for assessing earthquake risk in Maputo.

10. Progress has been made in the use of technology and local capacities to develop effective early warning systems for frequent hazards such as cyclones and floods in Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Sri Lanka. Many countries and subregions have improved cooperation with neighbouring countries to reduce transboundary risks, including flooding in shared watersheds, tsunami early warning systems, locust infestations and health-related risks.

11. A collaborative programme will address the "last mile" early warning gaps existing in Sri Lanka. A national coordination mechanism has been established in relation to tsunami early warning in Madagascar. The capacities of the Mauritius Meteorological Services to observe, detect, forecast and issue early warnings for a wide variety of natural hazards have been developed.

12. The United Republic of Tanzania is building the capacities of coastal communities in tsunami and flood early warning and preparedness activities. in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Municipal Government of La Paz is implementing a flood and landslide early warning system, including a hydraulic-hydrological real-time monitoring system.

Priority 3
Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

13. Average global progress is weak across most areas relating to priority 3, particularly in the development and application of research methods and tools for multirisk assessments, the inclusion of disaster risk reduction concepts and practices in school curricula and education material and the development of nationwide public awareness strategies to stimulate a culture of disaster resilience. Many countries report the need to do more and better in these areas.

14. In the education sector, France, the United States and Uzbekistan, among other countries, are pioneering legal action to make disaster risk reduction mandatory as part of their nationwide education agendas and curricula. In Angola and Burundi, the Ministries of Education promoted the integration of disaster risk reduction into education. In Burkina Faso, environmental education was included at the primary school level and disaster risk reduction is was partly integrated into higher education. Tajikistan and Madagascar developed school material on disaster risk reduction, and Mozambique initiated training for primary schoolteachers and children on how to live with disasters. Innovative materials have been produced, including handbills in Ghana and a community vulnerability self-assessment kit in Indonesia.

15. In Costa Rica, environmental education programmes include disaster risk reduction, while the National Commission of University Deans promotes disaster risk reduction through community outreach programmes, research and teaching. In Ecuador, an educational reform effort is under way and risk management has been proposed as part of the mandatory curricula at various levels of education.

16. A capacity development project, "Periperi U", is being implemented as a partnership between 10 African universities, led by the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human

Security has assisted the city of Brazzaville and the authorities of the Congo in establishing a Risk Management Institute.

17. Finally, numerous safe school initiatives have been implemented worldwide, including, in India, a project to ensure school seismic safety in mountainous areas; in Colombia, municipal action in Bogotá to reduce the structural vulnerability of Government schools; in Nepal, a training programme for students and masons to be "ambassadors" of school seismic safety; and in Japan, efforts to promote the retrofitting of all schools built before 1981. Teachers in rural Ecuador are receiving a school safety course on relevant hazards to which each locality is exposed.

Priority 4
Reduce the underlying risk factors

18. Progress on the underlying risk factors remains a challenge in most countries. Many countries have difficulty addressing underlying risk drivers such as poor urban and local governance, vulnerable rural livelihoods and ecosystem decline in a way that leads to reduced risk of damages and economic loss. At the same time, the governance arrangements for disaster risk reduction in many countries do not facilitate the integration of risk considerations into development. In general, the institutional and legislative arrangements for disaster risk reduction are weakly connected to development sectors.

19. Some countries in the Americas and Asia have established environmental and climate change as national priorities and have developed relevant legislation, policy and institutional frameworks. In Costa Rica, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy has included disaster risk assessments in project proposal formats on national investments. Several African countries are implementing measures to protect key industries from disaster risk. These include contingency plans for the agriculture sector in Madagascar, the poultry industry in the United Republic of Tanzania and various institutions in Ghana. Mozambique is taking steps to protect transport and communications infrastructure and ensure the continuity of the energy supply during flooding. The tourism sector is in the early stages of factoring disaster risk reduction into its development plans, for example with regard to specific public health actions in Mauritius and Seychelles.

20. Several countries, including Fiji, Oman and the Philippines, have initiated programmes in response to the World Disaster Reduction Campaign "Hospitals safe from disasters". Fiji has undertaken an audit of the main hospitals and health facilities to assess their structural resilience and service continuation during emergencies. The Hospital Safety Index, which provides a tool for a rapid assessment of the structural, non-structural and functional safety of health facilities, has continued to be implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean, and countries in other regions have also adapted and applied it.

Priority 5
Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

21. Noteworthy progress is being made to develop preparedness for response, often closely linked with early warning activities as described above. All countries, in particular those in Asia and the Americas, report overall progress in strengthening their capacities to manage disaster risks. While many African countries have a contingency plan in place, Cape Verde, Madagascar, Mauritius and Mozambique are

good examples in that their plans encompass all administrative levels. Ghana has established a website to link regions by VHF radio. Kenya has put in place a National Disaster Operation Centre. In Togo, the United Nations cluster approach is being used to facilitate participation under sectoral leadership.

22. Insurance and new mechanisms, such as catastrophe pools and bonds, are being increasingly adopted in middle-income countries in order to replace traditional relief and reconstruction funding from Government and international sources. Mexico has issued a catastrophe bond to provide a funding mechanism for response and recovery in the case of a major earthquake, while the Caribbean countries and Turkey have developed catastrophe pool mechanisms. The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility has already made payments to Saint Lucia and Dominica as a result of the November 2007 earthquake and to Turks and Caicos after Hurricane Ike in 2008. A similar mechanism is being put in place in South-eastern Europe. Several countries, including India, Malawi, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru, have implemented weather derivative insurance schemes to protect agriculture from weather-related hazards.

B. Action at the regional level

23. *The Global Assessment Report* indicates that Europe, which is represented mostly by high-income countries and includes some upper-middle-income countries, reports higher progress than all other regions and across all priorities. Africa, with a majority of low-income countries, has made progress similar to other developing regions, except in priority areas 2 and 3. The Pacific region, owing to the presence of high-income countries such as Australia and New Zealand, has made more progress in priority areas 1, 3 and 4 than all other regions except Europe. The Americas have made more progress than Asia, except in priority areas 2 and 4.

24. **Africa**: Strengthened coordination and collaboration with the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities, and increasing consultations with other regional organizations, have accelerated the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Programme of Action.

25. The Economic Community of West African States approved, and began implementing, a disaster risk reduction policy and strategy in cooperation with the Strategy secretariat and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a partnership between the World Bank and the Strategy. The Economic Community of Central African States, with support from the European Union, has likewise moved to strengthen capacities in the region.

26. A regional capacity development project for severe weather forecasting and flash flood guidance in the Southern Africa Development Community is being developed by WMO and South Africa. The aim is to link technical capabilities to decision-making processes, and the project is being complemented with end-to-end multi-hazard early warning systems, initially in Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa.

27. Several partners, including the African Union, the UNDP Drought Monitoring Centre, the Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank and the Strategy secretariat are cooperating to strengthen a regional network on drought risk reduction and to ensure that drought risk reduction strategies and tools are

incorporated into national adaptation and development processes. The third African Drought Adaptation Forum was convened in September 2008. National workshops led to the finalization of the analysis of drought risk reduction policies and plans in Kenya and Uganda. Analysis in Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia is under way.

28. **West Asia and North Africa**: Regional organizations have focused on consolidating and securing political commitments and the engagement of policymakers in disaster risk reduction. The League of Arab States has taken a lead in promoting disaster risk reduction in regional policies on climate change, environment and disaster management. It undertook the first regional assessment on progress in disaster risk reduction and convened a regional workshop in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in May 2009, hosted by the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, to discuss the report and joint future actions.

29. The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, at its twentieth session, in December 2008, reaffirmed its commitment to reduce disaster risk and establish national platforms for risk reduction. The extraordinary ministerial session in May 2009 called for the development of an Arab strategy for disaster risk reduction and the establishment of a regional platform for disaster risk reduction by the first quarter of 2010.

30. Technical capacity development and knowledge-management efforts included the development of a regional database on hazards and risks and the launching of the Regional Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction, Training and Research, both hosted by the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, and the translation of disaster risk reduction terminology into Arabic.

31. A regional training workshop on Hyogo Framework implementation and reporting was organized for national authorities and other regional partners with the secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization. As a result, disaster risk reduction featured prominently at various subsequent events in Central Asia and the Economic Cooperation Organization region, reflecting the increasing political commitment of the authorities.

32. A Strategy partnership with civil society organizations, aimed at enhancing community-based disaster risk reduction and piloting key initiatives in building community resilience, was launched with the Arab Network for Environment and Development, which has non-governmental organization members in 18 countries.

33. **Europe**: Regional activities have focused on maximizing the knowledge available in the region and stimulating collaboration among partners, for example through the use of regional meetings to exchange experience and build stronger partnerships with United Nations agencies and the Strategy system partners, particularly the World Bank. These included two European national platform and Hyogo Framework focal point meetings, an international workshop on the theme "For a new governance of natural risks", several meetings of thematic working groups, and the partnership of the Strategy and the Council of Europe within the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, which supports the implementation of the Hyogo Framework in the European/Mediterranean region.

34. The regional ministerial conference on disaster risk management held in Sofia agreed to develop a two-year workplan on disaster risk management and to establish the South-eastern Europe Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Programme to reduce the vulnerability to hydrometeorological and other hazards in the region. It

was also agreed to request prime ministers in the region to contribute funds for the development of a Central Europe disaster risk catastrophe insurance mechanism. As part of this initiative, WMO and UNDP are working together to enhance the capacity of countries to collect and analyse hydrometeorological data and to reduce vulnerability to natural hazards, in alignment with the standards and policies of the European Union.

35. **Asia and the Pacific**: The third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2008 and attracted a wide range of high-level stakeholders. The conference launched the Kuala Lumpur initiative on public-private partnerships for disaster risk reduction, which promotes corporate social responsibility and supportive fiscal policies as well as facilitating the development of a catastrophic risk insurance market.

36. Pacific island countries created the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management to improve regional cooperation and communication, for example through the hosting of the meetings of regional groups, including disaster managers and the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network.

37. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Asia Partnership continues to foster regional networking, coordination, collaboration and resource mobilization in the area of disaster risk reduction. At the second meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Task Force on Emergency Preparedness, held in August 2008, the APEC economies endorsed the Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Asia Pacific Region 2009-2015 — an initiative of Peru. The strategy is an important step forward in focusing attention on disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness in the APEC region.

38. The Committee on Disaster Management of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formally endorsed its participation in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Asia Partnership, and considers the Hyogo Framework as a guiding principle for its work. The Strategy also supported the development of a paper by the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism thematic working group on environment and disaster management entitled "Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in ASEAN: challenges and opportunities for partnership with the UN".

39. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Strategy secretariat have reached agreement on a memorandum of understanding to formalize cooperation on disaster risk reduction, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre have initiated a joint work planning process. These moves are enhancing capacities for implementing the Hyogo Framework.

40. **The Americas**: An important achievement in the region was the establishment of a regional platform under the leadership of the Organization of American States. The platform is supported by the Canadian International Development Agency and the World Bank, and was launched in Panama in March 2009.

41. The mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction within broader development agendas is supported by regional organizations — the Coordinating Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America, the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response

Agency and the Association of Caribbean States. Political commitment to the Hyogo Framework for Action has increased through several regional and subregional agreements and plans of action, such as the Strategic Framework for Education and Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in Panama in May 2009 by ministers and education authorities of Central America and the Dominican Republic.

42. The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States is developing a regional platform on flood early warning systems which will connect national emergency systems with local governments and local communities and establish a regional cadre of experts and network of community champions and leaders. The Caribbean tsunami warning system is expected to be operational by 2010, with a network of seismographs being established for the Caribbean region, as part of a global project by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

43. Regional collaboration between WMO and partners has resulted in the implementation of technical capacity development projects such as the Central America Flash Flood Guidance System and end-to-end multi-hazard early warning systems in three countries in Central America.

C. Action at the international level

Priority 1
Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

44. The United Nations Development Group Task Team on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, supported by the Strategy secretariat and co-chaired by UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), finalized and disseminated guidelines for United Nations country teams on integrating disaster risk reduction into the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework process. UNDP led a validation exercise among selected United Nations country teams to test the use of the guidance note and collect feedback. For 2009 and onward, the United Nations System Staff College will include disaster risk reduction as part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework training modules.

45. United Nations resident coordinators have an important role in promoting disaster risk reduction policies, and this responsibility is now reflected in their standard job descriptions. Disaster risk reduction was included in the recent training workshops for resident coordinators held in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa. As a result, many resident coordinators are playing a more proactive role in disaster risk reduction.

46. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery has supported the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction through its country assistance strategies and the formulation of country development strategies, such as poverty reduction strategy papers. However, translating plans into practice remains a challenge. A review of the 67 full and interim poverty reduction strategy papers showed that only 19 per cent devoted a whole chapter or section to disaster risk, 75 per cent mentioned the relationship between disaster risk and poverty and 25 per cent did not mention risk at all. Additional activities include catalysing global support for

building resilience into recovery and reconstruction after major disasters and launching a South-South cooperation programme to foster developing countries' leadership and exchange of knowledge and experience.

47. Tools and guidance for local governments have been developed in partnerships among United Cities and Local Governments, ProVention Consortium, the Earthquake and Megacities Initiatives, CITYNET, Local Governments for Sustainability and thematic platforms in the Americas and Asia. Elements for a "local Hyogo Framework for Action" have also been discussed in the regions. A meeting in Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea, will bring relevant partners together in August 2009 to contribute to the development of the global campaign on urban risk and safer cities 2010-2011.

48. An initiative to promote political will and accountability and to encourage investment in disaster risk reduction as a tool for climate change adaptation has quickly grown to engage 116 parliamentarians from 66 countries and several parliamentarians' networks around the world. This has led to advocacy initiatives by parliamentarians, steps toward new legislation and action plans in several countries, and the "Manila Call for Action of Parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation", adopted at a consultative meeting of parliamentarians in October 2008.

Priority 2
Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

49. New guidance and good practice information on early warning systems is being developed through a multiagency collaboration coordinated by WMO. This includes documentation of four examples — (a) the cyclone preparedness programme of Bangladesh; (b) the tropical cyclone early warning system of Cuba; (c) the vigilance system of France; and (d) the multi-hazard emergency preparedness programme of Shanghai, China — and a guideline entitled "Capacity development in multi-hazard early warning systems with focus on institutional collaboration and coordination".

50. The development of the risk update for the *Global Assessment Report* built on existing data sets developed by the World Bank Hotspot project, the UNDP Global Risk Identification Programme, UNEP and others, and also generated new data sets on risk, which shed a new light on global hazard and global risk distribution. The project partners — UNDP, the World Bank, UNEP/Global Resource Information Database (GRID)-Europe, the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, Columbia University and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction — developed refined methodologies for hazard modelling for five types of hazards, namely, cyclones, floods, earthquakes, landslides and tsunamis.

51. A revised "Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction" was developed by the Strategy secretariat in consultation with Strategy partners and the Strategy Scientific and Technical Committee. It is now available in all official languages of the United Nations.

52. A comprehensive risk assessment service package, which includes guidelines on the implementation of national risk assessment, urban risk assessment and national disaster observatory, was developed by the UNDP-based Global Risk Identification Programme. The programme also supported national risk assessments

in four countries, urban risk assessments in more than 30 cities and national disaster observatories in more than 30 countries.

53. Tsunami early warning systems continue to advance, including complementary activities in tsunami hazard risk assessment, emergency preparedness and response as part of comprehensive tsunami mitigation programmes. Intergovernmental coordination groups for tsunami early warning systems have now been established for the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, the north-eastern Atlantic, Mediterranean and connected seas and the Caribbean and adjacent regions, through the coordination of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. An international task team on disaster management and preparedness has been set up for the exchange of experiences and information on preparedness actions, education, awareness-raising campaigns and other matters.

54. In April 2008, the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System welcomed the offers by India, Australia and Indonesia to act as regional tsunami watch providers to replace, by 2011, the interim service provided by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii and the Japan Meteorological Agency. Additional progress includes enhanced regional arrangements for improved data-sharing policies, transmission of real-time data, and communication by national authorities downstream to endangered communities.

55. The United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), implemented by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, has provided technical advisory support to Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Namibia. In addition, a web-based portal has been set up to provide information and guidance on space-based information for disaster risk reduction and to help support networking by communities of practice, including the "SPIDER Global Thematic Partnership". Many agencies cooperate in the framework of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems to improve the use of satellite observing systems for monitoring natural hazards and mitigating their impacts.

56. The United Nations University is developing a vulnerability assessment methodology for different hazards, focusing on floods and coastal hazards, for application in exposed locations in five countries.

Priority 3
Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

57. The Thematic Cluster/Platform on Knowledge and Education for Disaster Risk Reduction organized a policy dialogue on disaster risk reduction as an essential contributor to inclusive education at the UNESCO International Conference on Education, held in Geneva. UNESCO and the Strategy promoted the role of disaster risk reduction in sustainable development at the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, held in Bonn, Germany.

58. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighted the urgent need to implement disaster risk reduction education and school safety at all levels. The material and guidelines provided by the "Golden Library" for disaster risk reduction education have provided guidance in this area. The role and involvement of children as agents for change was highlighted through the child-centred disaster risk

reduction strategies of the United Nations Children's Fund. A number of Strategy system partners are addressing the needs of people with disabilities in disasters.

59. The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative, a joint programme of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Strategy and UNDP, provided capacity development, advisory and support services to the Governments of Mozambique and Uganda, and supported the design of a capacity development project for South-Eastern Europe. Several participatory training materials were prepared, and training for United Nations staff, including resident and humanitarian coordinators, was carried out.

Priority 4
Reduce the underlying risk factors

60. The 2008-2009 World Disaster Reduction Campaign has focused on ensuring that hospitals are safe from disasters. The World Health Organization, the World Bank and the Strategy, together with their partners, have promoted the campaign in all regions, through activities to increase awareness of the importance of structural and non-structural safety and the functionality of health facilities. The World Bank is preparing a guidance note on integrating disaster risk reduction concerns into the Bank's projects on new infrastructure investments, including building safety standards.

61. Substantial scaling up of activity by leading environmental organizations has been taking place. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has prepared guidance and training materials on ecosystem management for disaster risk reduction. The World Wide Fund for Nature disseminated a report entitled "Natural security" outlining the role of protected areas in reducing disaster risks. The guidance note by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on strategic environmental assessment and disaster risk reduction was endorsed by members of the Development Assistance Committee Network on Environment and Development Cooperation in October 2008. UNEP provided training in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to coastal zone managers through the Mangroves for the Future initiative.

62. The Strategy secretariat continued to promote disaster risk reduction as an adaptation policy and to build close working relationships on the topic with the parties and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. During the period, cooperation was enhanced with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on humanitarian aspects of climate change. The Strategy secretariat also provided information and submissions to Convention processes, including the Nairobi work programme.

63. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change decided in April 2009 to produce a special report on managing the risk of extreme events to advance climate change adaptation, following a proposal by Norway and the Strategy secretariat. The special report will provide an authoritative basis of factual information on climate-related disaster risk and methodologies for reducing and managing risks.

64. The World Bank developed the Catastrophe Deferred Draw Down Option to respond to a request by middle-income countries for a financial instrument that would address the immediate funding needs in the aftermath of a disaster caused by a natural hazard. This will allow ministries of finance to take a proactive role in

disaster risk management by providing a source of immediate liquidity in the aftermath of disasters.

65. At the 2009 session of the Global Platform, Colombia promoted the concept that a minimum of 30 per cent of national adaptation funds could be allocated for national-level disaster risk reduction measures. This is based on the past experience of Colombia in reducing adaptation costs by investing for disaster risk reduction.

Priority 5
Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

66. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee sub-working group on preparedness and contingency planning contributed to risk analysis for better preparedness through the quarterly "Early Warning — Early Action" report, which is aimed at fostering enhanced preparedness and early humanitarian response, with particular attention to potential new crises and to changes in existing emergencies.

67. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Informal Task Force on Climate Change initiated an inter-agency consultation process on the humanitarian implications of climate change in order to assess the potential impacts of climate change on humanitarian activities, and the role of humanitarian actors in disaster risk reduction was discussed in the context of a number of regional and national consultations. Findings have reconfirmed the need to strengthen the Hyogo Framework for Action as the common framework under which all communities of practice can work together in an integrated manner.

68. A guidance and indicator package for strengthening disaster preparedness efforts has been developed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. A number of international organizations are mainstreaming the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance into legal development initiatives. At least 110 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies have an active preparedness role in their national emergency plans.